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SUBJECT: AUSTRIA ON COMMISSIONER'S CUBA VISIT

REF: STATE 20108

Classified By: Econ/Pol Counselor Dean Yap. Reason: 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) MFA America's Department Director Isabel Rauscher confirmed to E/P Counselor 3/3 that EU Development Commissioner Michel's visit to Cuba March 6-7 will go ahead. She said that all member states had supported proceeding with the visit.

12. (C) E/P Counselor expressed concern at the decision, noting that the new government had done nothing to earn such EU recognition, that its membership suggested no likely improvement in civil or human rights, and that the visit would be abused for propaganda purposes by the Cuban government. Rauscher emphasized that Michel was traveling in a fact-finding capacity, would not enter into any agreements with the new regime, and would operate firmly within the two-track policy. Rauscher did not know, however, if Michel would meet with any dissidents or representatives of civil society. E/P Counselor urged Austria to press Michel on these issues, and, to counter official propaganda, to make clear the terms and purpose of his visit.  
Kilner